

USIB-M-328, 25 May 64

1. SNIE 50-2-64 (LIMITED DISTRIBUTION)

In opening the discussion on this item the Chairman explained that this special meeting had been called because of the urgent requirement for consideration of the subject estimate by the Board before the regular meeting scheduled for 27 May 1964. At a later point in the meeting Mr. McCone stressed the importance of the estimate and the need for USIB members to keep it under continuous review.

After extensive discussion, the USIB then approved SNIE 50-2-64 as amended.

USIB-M-329, 27 May 64

2. SNIE 50-2-64 (Limited Distribution; USIB-M-328, item 1, 25 May 1964)

While still in executive session, the Chairman stated that he was disturbed about some interpretations that were being placed upon SNIE 50-2-64 as approved at the last meeting by USIB. He noted that the wording of some of the Assumptions on which that SNIE was based were being interpreted as applying to a scale of effort which he thought was larger than that which USIB had understood and taken into account in the estimate.

Following further comments and discussion on this matter, Mr. McCone proposed, and USIB agreed, that the Board of National Estimates and the USIB representatives should prepare for USIB consideration a supplemental paper clarifying the applicability of SNIE 50-2-64 to the scale of effort involved in the Assumptions on which it is based.

In view of the sensitive nature of this subject the Chairman of the Board of National Estimates (BNE) asked for USIB guidance on the release of the subject SNIE to USIA, and recommended against its release to any foreign government. The DIA member stressed that this estimate had been given a very restricted distribution on a need-to-know basis. The State member noted that the Director of USIB had a need-to-know since he sits with the National Security Council.

After a brief discussion the Board agreed that:

- a. The State member would show SNIE 50-2-64 to the Director of USIB on an Eyes Only basis.
- b. The subject SNIE will not be released to any foreign governments.

Washington Post

26 June 71

Nixon Documents Revealed

CIA Advised in '69 U.S. Could Pull Out

This story is derived entirely from information distributed by United Press International and Associated Press.

The Chicago Sun-Times says just as it is at least for another in an article today that the generation.

Nixon administration was told by the Central Intelligence Agency in 1969 that it could immediately withdraw from Vietnam and "all of Southeast Asia would remain just as it is at least for another generation."

In another article based on material from secret government documents, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch said yesterday that former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara told President Johnson privately in 1966 that military escalation in North and South Vietnam was not having the desired effect and reported he saw "no reasonable way to bring the war to an end soon."

The Sun-Times, in a copy-righted story in Saturday's edition, says the CIA told Mr. Nixon at the beginning of his administration that withdrawal would result in the immediate loss of Laos.

The newspaper quotes a CIA advisory to the President as saying, Prince "Sihanouk would preserve Cambodia by a straddling effort. All of Southeast Asia would remain

"Thailand, in particular, would continue to maintain close relations with the U.S. and would seek additional support. Simultaneously, Thailand would make overtures and move toward China and the Soviet Union. It would simply take aid from both sides to preserve its independence."

"North Vietnam would consume itself in Laos and South Vietnam. Only Laos would definitely follow into the Communist orbit."

The CIA totally rejected "the so-called domino theory on which U.S. policy was based in the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson administrations," the Sun-Times says, and followed a position consistent with a long line of estimates dating back to the original involvement in Vietnam in 1954.

See PAPERS, A10, Col. 1

The Los Angeles Times says the Johnson administration in 1965 decided "without extensive consideration" to commit land troops to Vietnam. All.

PAPERS, From A1

"The CIA produced the estimate as part of its pessimistic assessment of the value of launching a bombing campaign against North Vietnam," the newspaper says.

The controversial secret Pentagon study of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war was prepared in 1968 and covers events through 1967. The Sun-Times article is based on events of 1969.

The Post-Dispatch in its story said the memorandum from McNamara to President Johnson is dated Oct. 14, 1966, and is contained in the secret Pentagon study. The memorandum was written at a time when both men were speaking optimistically in public about progress being made militarily, the paper said.

McNamara was quoted as writing that the first year and a half of bombing of North Vietnam had failed to stem infiltration or crack the enemy's morale. He recommended the bombing at its 1966 level.

The Post-Dispatch said the Pentagon documents showed the Joint Chiefs of Staff disagreed strongly with McNamara's assessment.

"In essence," McNamara was quoted as saying, "we find ourselves — from the point of view of the important war for the complicity of the people — no better, and if anything, worse off."

"This important war must be fought and won by the Vietnamese themselves. We have known this from the beginning. But the discouraging truth is that, as was the case in 1961 and 1963 and 1965, we have not found the formula, the catalyst, for training and inspiring them into effective action."

The government has labeled the Pentagon papers "top secret," but the Post-Dispatch said the several hundred pages of copies it obtained bore no security classification. It said, however there was a blank space at the bottom of the paper had been laid over the place where a security label is usually stamped.

A Justice Department spokesman said last night in Washington that the government was reviewing the articles in the Post-Dispatch and considering whether to take legal action against that newspaper.

Later, however, the Justice Department said the Post-Dispatch had advised the department the newspaper would not publish further documents from the Vietnam study pending a decision today by the Supreme Court in litigation involving The Washington Post and The New York Times.

In the October memorandum and in one drafted for the President one month later, McNamara painted a gloomy picture of the pacification program aimed at bringing rural areas of South Vietnam under government control.

The report went on: "Pacification has, if anything, gone backward," McNamara said. He said that since the inception of the program about two years earlier enemy forces had grown, attacks and terrorism increased and more railroads were closed and highways cut.

"The pacification program has been stalled for years," he said one month later. "It is stalled today. The situation in this regard is no better — possibly worse — than it was in 1965, 1963 and 1961."

McNamara discounted as "grossly optimistic" a claim that the South Vietnamese had gained control of areas containing 1.5 million people

during a 14-month period in 1965-66.

"It should be noted that about 30 per cent of the reported gains by the South Vietnamese government probably resulted from movement of refugees into cities and towns," he said.

McNamara told the President in the October memorandum that the enemy "apparently has adjusted to our stopping his drive for military victory and has adopted a strategy of keeping us busy and waiting us out."

"The infiltration routes would seem to be one-way trails to death for the North Vietnamese. Yet, there is no sign of an impending break in enemy morale and it appears that he can more than replace his losses by infiltration from North Vietnam and recruitment in South Vietnam.

"I believe we should consider terminating bombing in all of North Vietnam, or at least in the northeast zones, for an indefinite period in connection with covert moves toward peace."

McNamara also proposed trying to split the Vietcong from Hanoi, pressing contacts with the North Vietnamese and developing a plan to give the Vietcong a role in negotiations and postwar life.

McNamara supported his view of the ineffectiveness of bombing with extracts from appraisals by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Institute for Defense Analysis.

Those reports indicated that the bombing of the north had no serious effect on supplies or morale.

In the November memorandum, McNamara took a more optimistic view of results of both the military build-up and the bombing of North Vietnam, the Post-Dispatch said.

Pentagon analysts who wrote the narrative history of the war said the reaction to McNamara's October proposals from the Joint Chiefs of Staff was "predictively rapid—and violent." They contended the McNamara memorandum did not take into account the "adverse impact over time of continued bloody defeats on the morale of Vietcong and North Vietnamese army forces and the determination of their political military leaders."

The joint chiefs called the air campaign against the north "an indispensable part of our overall war effort."

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Approved For Release 2004/09/03 : CIA-RDP80R01720R001200030061-5

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Approved For Release 2004/09/03 : CIA-RDP80R01720R001200030061-5

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26 JUNE 1900EDT
TIME STAMP

SUBJECT: CHICAGO SUN-TIMES ON CIA POSITION ON VIETNAM

SOURCE : CHICAGO SUN-TIMES (BY PHONE)

DTG : 26 1400EDT

DISTO : DCI, DDCI, EX/DIR, DDI (2), DDP (VIA CSDO), DDS&T
VIA D/OSI), DDS, D/NIPE, D/OCI (5), D/ONE, D/OSI,
D/OSR, MR. HAND, C/IRS, SAVA, OCI (4), C/OPSCEN,
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SEE ATTACHED TEXT

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CLASSIFICATION

The Chicago Sun Times
CIA Gives Pullout Advice
Dateline Washington

The Nixon administration was advised by the CIA in 1969 that it could immediately withdraw from Vietnam and that "all of Southeast Asia would remain just as it is at least for another generation". Government documents revealed Friday that the CIA offered the following prediction of what would happen: If President Nixon, at the start of his administration, had pulled all US troops out of Vietnam and opened the way to a possible Viet Cong takeover of the Saigon government, "we would lose Laos immediately; Sihanouk would preserve Cambodia by a straddling effort. All of SEA would remain just as it is for at least another generation. Thailand in particular would continue to maintain close relations with the US and would seek additional support. Simultaneously, Thailand would make overtures and move toward China and the Soviet Union. It would simply take aid from both sides to preserve its independence. North Vietnam would consume itself in Laos and South Vietnam. Only Laos would definitely follow into the Communist orbit". In totally rejecting the so-called domino theory, on which US policy was based in the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations, the CIA took a position consistent with a long line of estimates dating back to the original US involvement in 1964. For example, the documents show that on May 25, 1964, the CIA declared in a National Intelligence

Estimate, that the US would "retain considerable leverage in Southeast Asia even if Laos and South Vietnam came under North Vietnamese control". The CIA produced the estimate as part of its pessimistic assessment of the value of launching a bombing campaign against North Vietnam. It argued that air attacks were unlikely to break Hanoi's will and carried the danger of escalating the war into a direct confrontation with Communist China and the Soviet Union. "Retaliatory measures which the North might take with Laos and South Vietnam might make it increasingly difficult for the US to regard its objectives as obtainable by limited means. Thus, difficulties of comprehension might increase on both sides as the scale of actions mounted". President Lyndon B. Johnson rejected the CIA's advice and started sustained bombing in February 1965. Similarly, President Nixon disregarded the CIA estimate in 1969 and decided on a slow withdrawal, an expansion of the war into Laos and Cambodia, and a partial revival of the bombing of North Vietnam. On several occasions since coming to office, Mr. Nixon has referred to an immediate total US withdrawal from Southeast Asia as "precipitent and the equivalent of our defeat and humiliation". In various ways, he has signalled an intention to preserve non-Communist governments in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

Instead of pulling out rapidly, Mr. Nixon has withdrawn gradually to give the South Vietnamese a reasonable

chance to maintain their present government. US troop levels were at 540,000 when Mr. Nixon took office. They are scheduled to be down to 184,000 by December 1, close to the end of Mr. Nixons third year in office. The president has not stated when if ever US forces will be completely gone from Vietnam. Meanwhile, Mr. Nixon staunchly denied that the invasions of Cambodia in 1969 and Laos in 1970 constituted expansions of the war or even related to political conditions in those countries. In 1969, US troops joined South Vietnamese forces in the invasion while the Laos incursion was conducted by Vietnamese ground forces supported by US planes and helicopters. Richard Nixon defended both actions as efforts to speed the "end of the war" in South Vietnam. Nevertheless, the administration has exhibited interest in preserving the non-communist character of the governments of Laos and Cambodia. There has been a massive infusion of military and economic aid to the anti-communist regime of Lon Nol in Cambodia and US air power continues to support South Vietnamese and Cambodian army combat operations there. The Cambodian operations began on the heels of Lon Nol's overthrow of Sihanouk, the man the CIA predicted would retain power if the US left Southeast Asia. The US did not leave and Sihanouk fell. In some quarters his overthrow has been ascribed to the CIA.

In Laos, the US has continued extensive bombing raids both along the Ho Chi Minh infiltration routes in the southern

part of the country and in north Laos near the Plain de Jarres. The north Laos operations, bombing and aid to anti-communist guerillas, are linked to retention of a neutralist government in Vientiane, the capitol.

The government documents disclosed to the Sun Times by a number of reliable sources show the CIA consistently reported that the bombing of North Vietnam was not effective either in military or political terms. The CIA's estimates, the documents also revealed, provided the basis of former Defense Secretary Clark Clifford's silent campaign to get the bombing stopped in 1968. The CIA's Office of National Estimates ~~advanced the case~~ advanced the case against the bombing in 1965 despite CIA director John A. McCone's advice that US planes "hit them harder, more frequently and inflict greater damage". In an April 2, 1965 memo to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, White House advisor McGeorge Bundy, and Ambassador Maxwell Taylor, McCone argued that Mr. Johnson's decision the previous day to commit US troops to combat would work "only if our airstrikes against the North are sufficiently heavy and damaging really to hurt the North Vietnamese". He warned that slow escalation of the bombing would open the US government to "increasing pressure" from the press and public opinion. Then McCone concluded "we will find ourselves mired down in combat in the jungle in a military effort we cannot win and from which we will have extreme difficulties in extricating ourselves".